

Launch of the National Fund for Public Interest Media Sierra Leone



Stakeholders launch a National Fund for Public Interest Media Photo credit: Calabash Newspaper

The National Fund for Public Interest Media Sierra Leone (NaFPIM) was [launched](#) on 19 June 2023 at Cabenda Hotel in Freetown. The Media Reform Coordinating Group (MRCG) is managing the Fund with the Multi-Stakeholders Board providing governance and policy direction.

Key figures who made statements at the launch included Ahmed Sahid Nasralla, (SLAJ's president), Edward Kargbo (the Sierra Leone Country Representative of the BBC Media Action), Umaru Fofana (former SLAJ's president), Mohamed Rahman Swaray (Minister of Information and Communications), Dr Francis Sowa (MRCG's National Coordinator).

In the opening remarks, Nasralla explained that the Fund had been established in accordance with one of the recommendations of the Media Viability and Investment Conference in Freetown in April 2022. The Fund, according to him, was also an outcome of the repeal of the criminal libel laws in Part V of the Public Order Act 1965, since media stakeholders had argued that the laws prevented investments in the Sierra Leonean media by private persons. The Fund would hopefully help address the economic challenges that inhibited independent reporting by the media in the interest of the public, he noted.



Nasralla delivers opening statement at NaFPIM launch

In his statement, Edward Kargbo lauded the launch of the Fund as historic, expressing joy that the BBC Media Action was part of the project of establishing the Fund. Only when the media were free and independent that they could perform their fundamental functions, he stated.



The Minister of Information and Communication said the launch of the Fund was manifestation of the government’s commitment to working with and supporting the media. The government was committed to supporting the Fund, and it would provide its own financial support to it, the Minister pledged.

Information Minister Swaray delivers keynote address at the launch



Launching the Fund, Umaru Fofana highlighted the poor economic state of particularly the mainstream media and their enduring dominance in terms of providing reliable contents, in spite of the rise in social-media use. Charitable, corporate and private entities needed to provide funds to the Fund without attempting to influence the work of journalists, Fofana urged.

Umaru Fofana launches the Fund Photo credit: Politico Newspaper



In his own remarks, Dr Francis Sowa explained that the Fund would ensure that Sierra Leonean journalism held all kinds of people to account, and media institutions which would fulfil set criteria would be offered grants to enhance their work. The concept of a National Fund for Public Interest Media in Sierra Leone stems from the National Action Plan for Media Viability which was agreed with key stakeholders in the wake of the Sierra Leone National Media Viability and Investment Conference held in April 2022. Recommendations generated

by the conference included the following: “Government and development partners should commit to a national fund for public interest media” (Recommendation 6).